

### IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows. Additions have been underlined and deletions are marked as strikethrough.

**Please replace the paragraph starting on page 4, line 21 with the following:**

a' Accordingly, the present invention provides a method for parallel approval of an electronic document by a plurality of users, comprising the steps of:

- A) generating an original Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC 0", embedded or linked to the electronic document;
- B) making the electronic document to available to each user; and
- C) for approval by each user, performing the sub-steps of:
  - i) opening the electronic document for approval;
  - ii) retrieving DAC 0;
  - iii) approving the electronic document;
  - iv) generating for the electronic document an approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DAC x";
  - v) comparing DAC x to DAC 0, and proceeding with the approval only if DAC x is equal to DAC 0; and
  - vi) storing approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x".

**Please replace the paragraph starting on page 6, line 19 with the following:**

a<sup>2</sup> According to yet another embodiment of the invention there is provided a method for parallel approval of sections of an electronic document by a plurality of users, the method comprising the steps of:

- A) generating for each section of the electronic document an original section Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DACs 0", linked to said section of the electronic document;
- B) making the electronic document available to each user; and
- C) for approval by each user of corresponding sections of the electronic document, performing the sub-steps of:
  - i) opening the electronic document for approval;
  - ii) selecting the corresponding sections for approval;

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cont

- iii) retrieving ~~each of the~~ DACs 0 linked to the each of the corresponding sections of the electronic document;
  - iv) approving the corresponding sections of the electronic document;
  - v) generating for each of the corresponding sections a section approval Data Authentication Code, hereinafter referred to as "DACs x";
  - vi) comparing the DACs x to the corresponding DACs 0, and proceeding with the approval only if in each case DACs x is equal to DACs 0; and
  - vii) storing approval information in a user Approval Data Packet, hereinafter referred to as "ADP x".
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**Please replace the paragraph starting on page 10, line 10 with the following:**

a<sup>3</sup>

Step A) of the method of FIG. 1 consists of generating an original Data Authentication Code, "DAC 0", that is linked to the electronic document. The DAC is preferably generated through the use of a one way hash function, but may generally consist of any code representing the electronic document in such a manner that modifying the document would result in a different representative code. DAC 0 may either be stored inside the document (i.e. embedded) or made available to users through a linked storage system.

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**Please replace the paragraph starting on page 11, line 21 with the following:**

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After the parallel approvals, the ADPs generated through this process can either be stored in a linked storage system or sent to a merge system designed to incorporate the ADPs into the original document (i.e., embedded in the document). With the merge system, once all the approvals have been completed, the ADPs can be processed to incorporate the original approval information back into the original document. Since the addition of each approval information has the effect of changing the content of the document, the DACs of the original document must be modified with each approval that is incorporated. In effect, the approval and audit trail information from the ADP would have to be added to the original document. With the incorporation of each ADP, the DAC must be modified accordingly.

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